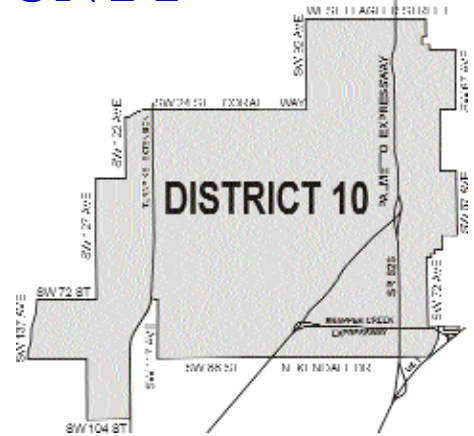




MIAMI-DADE COUNTY COMMISSIONER JAVIER SOUTO DISTRICT 10

Holiday Newsletter



Dear Neighbor:

As your elected County Commissioner, I would like to inform you about the issues that we are working on and our major accomplishments for 2000.

Miami-Dade County was devastated by the severe flooding following the heavy rains on October 3, 2000. This severe flooding has cost Miami-Dade County residents hundreds of millions of dollars in property damage and has resulted in loss of life. This severe flooding will almost certainly cause insurance companies to increase premiums to Miami-Dade County residents and may lead residents in low lying areas that are subject to annual flooding to become uninsurable. These floods cost residents, insurance companies, and local government hundreds of millions of dollars in damages and result in a loss of productivity and business when our main arterial roads become impassable for days and weeks. Miami-Dade County will continue to suffer more frequent severe flooding incidents in the coming years due to increased construction and population density.

Miami-Dade County cannot continue with a plan of haphazard patchwork repair of a storm drainage system that is woefully inadequate to safeguard the life and property of its residents. A major Miami-Dade County Management Master Plan with an enhanced system of canals, drainage ditches, and pumps is needed to reduce flooding throughout our community. The high probability of another major flooding episode during next year's rainy season, along with the potential for severe loss of life and property should Miami-Dade County receive a direct hit from a category five hurricane during next year's hurricane season, mandates that the County complete the Miami-Dade County Storm-water Management Master Plan immediately and begin implementing the construction phase as soon as possible.

Recently we were able to construct a major county wide sewer system under an emergency Federal Order to prevent an ecological disaster. It is clear that the impending threat to human life resulting from an antiquated and inadequate storm water drainage system is a much more serious problem. If Miami-Dade County has spent hundreds of millions of dollars in recent years in different projects, then we can find the funds to overhaul our storm sewer drainage system.

This is why I sponsored legislation, which was approved by the Board of County Commissioners, declaring the construction of a new Storm-water Drainage System as the County's number one priority and accordingly directing the County Manager to report back to the County Commission with a Storm-water Management Master Plan and an

accompanying plan for securing federal, state and local funding to implement the construction phase of this plan immediately. It directs the Manager to prepare a state and federal legislative package requesting that our State and Congressional delegation assist us in securing funds during this year's legislative session to construct a new comprehensive drainage system. It further directs the Manager to identify the funding level necessary for the County to purchase enough pumps to assist in draining all the neighborhoods that were flooded during the October 3rd storm because four pumps for the entire unincorporated area is unacceptable.

This year the Florida Windstorm Underwriting Association sent out notices of proposed rate increases averaging 96% statewide. The proposed rate increases are excessive and may force many homeowners to drop their insurance coverage, under insure their homes, or even sell their homes. I sponsored a resolution, which was adopted by the Board of County Commissioners, urging the Florida Legislature to repeal the Florida Statute that grants the final authority over windstorm insurance premiums to a three member arbitration board. It is unconscionable that three non-elected arbitrators, who are not accountable to the people, can have such vast power over the lives of hundreds of thousands of Florida residents. We need to abolish this law and return the final power to approve or reject rate increases to the Insurance Commissioner who is elected and accountable to the people.

I hold a Town Meeting the second Thursday of every month at the West Dade Regional Library (9445 Coral Way, 2nd Floor), and the fourth Thursday of every month at the Winston Park Club House (8100 SW 132nd Avenue). Both meetings start at 7:00 pm. You are invited to come and learn about your government and discuss any problems you may have. Every month we bring important guests to deal with different important matters and significant issues that affect our community.

I am enclosing an important survey. Please mail it as soon as possible. Thank you for your valuable opinion.

If you have any problems in your neighborhood, let me know immediately. I need your assistance and comments to help me serve you better. The best to you and to your family. Happy Holidays.

Sincerely,

Javier Souto
Javier Souto



Souto Drafts New Anti-Drug Law to Protect Our Children

In February, the County Commission adopted a law by Commissioner Souto concerning the sale of drug related paraphernalia. The law makes it unlawful for any person to own, posses, have under his control, sell or deliver any paraphernalia with the intent that it be used for unlawfully injecting, smoking, swallowing or using an illegal drug. This law has a unique feature pertaining to minors, in that the mere sale of this drug paraphernalia to a minor under 21 years of age is illegal, and law enforcement officials do not have to prove intent when the sale involves minors. In order to prevent an adult from purchasing the paraphernalia for the minor, the law makes it unlawful to sell this paraphernalia to an adult, if a reasonable person would suspect that the adult is acting as a go between or a straw purchaser for the minor. The penalties provided by this law for a first offense are a criminal fine of up to \$2,000 and imprisonment for up to 60 days. Most importantly, a second offense by an establishment that sells paraphernalia to minors can result in the revocation of all County Occupational Licenses and the Certificate of Operation.

The first duty of government should be to provide security for its citizens, especially for our youth and children who are most susceptible to potential addiction because of peer pressure for drug experimentation. Drug use by young people can have devastating effects on families. This is why the promotion of drug use by minors through the sale of drug paraphernalia by these so called "hip hop" or "head" shops that cater to young teens by selling bongos, novelty pipes, rolling paper machines, weight scales, and novelty items like pens and lighters that also serve as vials for carrying drugs cannot be tolerated in a civilized society that supports law and order. If you are a consenting adult and you allege that you purchased this paraphernalia for smoking tobacco products or to weigh or carry your medicine, there is not much the government can do unless it can prove that you intended to use the paraphernalia for drug consumption. However, in the case of minors we do not have to prove intent because they have no business consuming tobacco products and the such anyway.

We have a serious problem with alcohol and drug consumption by children and youths. Last year, Florida's death rates from heroin abuse increased by over 50 percent from the year before; cocaine related deaths have increased 65 percent, bringing the total of those killed by drugs to more than the entire murder rate for the state. According to a National Household Survey on Drug Abuse by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the age for first time drug use by children is declining, many initiating their addictive habits as early as 11 or 12 years of age. Florida's drug problem is serious. Statistics provided by the Governor's Office of Drug Control show that Florida's children use drugs at a rate 20 percent higher than the rest of the nation. A contributor to the increase in drug use by minors are the so called Rave Clubs. These late night clubs that are popular gathering spots for many young people, promote "club drugs," which are especially insidious because they foster in young people an atmosphere of acceptance into the Hip Hop Gang Culture. As an elected government official, my responsibility is to aide parents and families by preventing those who are providing our children with the tools to consume, process and transport drugs. Parents would be shocked to learn just how simple it is for their son or daughter to walk into one of these so called "head" shops and purchase a fancy water pipe, a colorful bong, a distinctive pendant or cigarette lighter that is in reality a cocaine spoon and other paraphernalia that glorify drugs.



Commissioner Souto presents a check for \$6,000 (\$500 monthly) to Vivian Donnell-Rodriguez, Director of the Parks & Recreation Department, for Security and Maintenance for Parks in District 10. In this year's budget, each County Commissioner's personal expense account was increased from \$12,000 to \$24,000 annually. Commissioner Souto rejected this year's proposed \$12,000 increase to his personal expense account, because he felt it was excessive. Commissioner Souto donated his additional personal expense funds to the "Friends of the Library" program and to the "Friends of the Parks" program.



Commissioner Souto presents a check for \$150,000 to the Mildred Pepper Senior Center so that the center can purchase new air-conditioned buses to transport its senior citizens to and from the center, as well as to activities throughout the County. The Mildred Pepper Senior Center is located in District 10 off Miller Road and is operated by the Little Havana Activities Center. The Commissioner regularly visits senior centers to sit down with our senior citizens to discuss their concerns and needs. The population in our community is aging and Commissioner Souto feels that the growing needs of the elderly such as affordable housing, transportation and medical care are often overlooked. Souto believes that the cost of these services, as well as taxes, must be kept in check because senior citizens live mostly on fixed income.



Commissioner Souto presents a check for \$6,000 (\$500 monthly) to Raymond Santiago, Director of the Library Department, to purchase books for the West Dade Regional Library (9441 SW 24 Street). This check represents half of the funds from the increase in the personal expense account, which Commissioner Souto donated to the "Friends of the Library."



Commissioner Souto was joined by members of the Cissel family, including her son James Cissel and her daughter Deborah Cissel-Zapata, as well as by Dorothy's friends in dedicating Southwest 127th Avenue, between Sunset Drive and Kendall Drive, as "Dorothy Cissel Way." Dorothy Cissel was an active leader in the Kendall Community for over thirty years; and served for many years as President of the Kendall Federation of Homeowners. She championed many causes in the community, including demanding better government accountability from local government officials. She was a tireless fighter against unbridled growth, over crowded schools and traffic congestion in Kendall. She demanded better services for the residents of Kendall. Dorothy was a dedicated teacher and educator for over thirty years, spending countless hours volunteering to help educate our children.

(Inset) The Miami-Dade Transit Department Bird Road Max pilot program is now a year old. Souto requested this mini-bus system to provide express service for the residents of Westchester to select destinations like Metrorail (Downtown) & Dadeland Mall. The pilot program has been a tremendous success. In just one year it has exceeded the rider-ship of the better known KAT (Kendall Area Transit) that has been operating for many years. I urge all of you to use this new service. Also, the Frequency of the bus that runs along route 71, which runs through the heart of District 10 is now every ½ hour, instead of once per hour. This is another accomplishment of the Souto Team. Commissioner Souto urges all of you to use these new or improved services. Feel free to let us know how it can be improved.

Souto Restricts Access by Children to Pornography in Libraries

Last year we began receiving more frequent complaints from parents about children accessing inappropriate material over the Internet at our public libraries. Even more disturbing, the parents told us that some adults were pulling up this material on the terminals and allowing minors that were walking behind them to view pictures of sex acts.

As a result of these complaints from residents like you, Commissioner Souto sponsored legislation that required our public libraries to install filtering software to prevent access to pornography on fifty percent (50%) of all Internet terminals at each Miami-Dade County Library. It also requires library staff to monitor to ensure that all minors use the Internet terminals equipped with filtering software, unless supervised directly by a parent, legal guardian, teacher or library staff. Furthermore, all Internet terminals not equipped with filters shall be fitted with privacy screens or positioned in a manner to limit viewing access by other patrons who do not wish to be exposed to pornography or inappropriate material.

This is a very delicate issue, because we have to balance the constitutional right of adults to access this information in our libraries, while protecting our youth from being exposed to this highly inappropriate content. Commissioner Souto truly believes that these new restrictions, which he directed the libraries to implement, strike a fair balance between the right to free access and the right not to be exposed to this material, and to protect your children or grandchildren from exposure to pornography or material that is too violent for young children.

Souto Prompts State DOT to Beautify Westchester On-Ramps

Commissioner Souto and Jose Abreu inspect the on ramps to the Palmetto Expressway. Motorists entering and existing the Palmetto Expressway (SR 826) at Coral Way and Bird Road may have noticed that the Florida Department of Transportation planted pygmy bougainvilleas at the on and off ramp medians to beautify the area.

Commissioner Souto had spoken to Jose Abreu, Secretary for the DOT and Gus Pego, Director of Operations, about doing something to enhance the on and off ramps on Coral Way which is the main entrance into the Community of Westchester and they responded with this beautification project. Two years ago, the Department of Transportation landscaped the entire Palmetto from the interchange at SR 836 to Dadeland with different varieties of palm trees and flowering trees. Today's DOT, under the leadership of Secretary Abreu, is a more responsive agency and looks at transportation from a holistic point of view with concerns for aesthetics and the environment.



The Citizen Wins... "Major Finished Projects"

- Obtained state funds to open 5 Regional Libraries on Sundays with the help of Representative Gaston Cantens.
- Obtained 200 Litter Cans for Bus Stops for District 10.
- Passed law mandating commercial establishments to place litter cans near entrances.
- Passed law requiring commercial establishments to install bike racks.
- Created the Bikes on Buses and Bikes on Metrorail Programs.
- Initiated the "Stolen Car Detection & Criminal Profile Program" at Seaport.
- Obtained street sweeper trucks to clean Dade's streets.
- Secured \$4 million to build an Equestrian Center at Tropical Park.
- Secured County property earmarked for development as Low Income High Density Apartments for use as a Soccer Park in Kendall.
- Purchased "Welcome to Westchester" and the "Welcome to Kendall" signs.
- Implemented safety improvements consisting of traffic light at SW 112th Ave. and 38 St.
- Created the "Golden Guide to the Dade County Code" and the "Resident Guide to Local Services."
- Landscaped and Beautified over 80 Miles of District Roads.
- Established an "Adopt-A-Road" program to permit local organizations and private corporations to beautify roads.
- Closed down two night clubs in district that were havens for drugs and prostitution. Closed down every lingerie modeling studio and massage parlor in district 10.
- Secured \$2 million to extend the county water system into the Sunkist Estates neighborhood when vinyl chloride, a carcinogen, was found in their wells.
- Obtained a state grant to landscape the Palmetto (SR 826).
- Appropriated \$12,400 in funding to the Kendall Federation of Homeowners for the purchase of traffic radar devices.
- Landscaped and lighted Waterway Drive area and SW 72nd Avenue near the Coral Way ball fields.
- Created "Friends of the Parks" program which was used to refurbish Sunset Park through Private Sector donations.
- Created "Friends of the Police" program which was used to open a privately funded police work station on Bird Road.
- Reformed County jail food service practices that were wasting millions of dollars on jail inmates.
- Obtained toddler playgrounds (tot lots) for Banyan Elementary School, Concord Park, Southern Estates Park in Village Green, and Sunset Park.
- Launched a new "Park Watch" program at Concord park.
- Paved over 9 square miles or one third of the roads in District 10.
- Secured funding for major street drainage improvements for the neighborhoods near Kings Creek, Ludlam and SW 48th St., and SW 87th Ave. and 2nd St.



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